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STUDIES

IN
THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

I'd Love to, but I Don't Have the Time

Jesuits and Leisure

GERARD L. STOCKHAUSEN, S.J.

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THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the studies, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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Gerard L. Stockhausen, S.J.

STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

27/3: MAY 1995

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For your information . . .

If three, or even only two, hours constitute a lengthy meeting for you, try seventy-seven days. That is how long the Thirty-fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus lasted, from January 5 to March 22 of this year. Of course, the 223 delegates at that gathering did not meet every hour of every one of those days; but sometimes, even as I write these comments several weeks after the congregation closed, it seemed that such was the case.

If now and then during the first half of the congregation we wondered where we were going and where it would all end, by the time we finished its second half we hoped with some reason that we had accomplished what the Society had a right to expect of us. And although the word "partnership" seldom or never explicitly occurs in the documents of the congregation, that may be a very appropriate way to describe a characteristic underlying all the results of the congregation. But more on that later in these remarks.

This was not the longest congregation: that dubious honor goes to the Eighth, which in 1645 spent one hundred and forty-five uninterrupted days in session through a Roman winter and spring. Nor was it the shortest: that took place during thirty-six days at the Sixth in 1608. This was not the largest congregation; the Thirty-second in 1974-75 had 236 members. Nor was it the smallest: the First Congregation in 1558 had only twenty members.

But this was surely the most universal congregation, with representatives from some eighty provinces all over the globe, some of them sending members for the first time. It was the first congregation in which a majority of members came from continents other than Europe and North America. For the first time in more than a half century, since the Twenty-eighth Congregation in 1938, before the Iron Curtain came down immediately after World War II, all of the provinces of Eastern Europe were able to send delegates. One such delegate has been a provincial for more than thirty-six consecutive years, constrained to shoulder that responsibility by the isolation and persecution of the Society in his land until the last few years. In several recent congregations, the United States delegation was the largest; not so in this one, in which India sent the largest number of participants. The delegates in our meetings spoke a variety of languages—English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, and, in the form of three brief sentences on its last day, Latin. The languages available in simultaneous translation were English, Spanish, and French. And every document meant for all the delegates had to be put into those three languages. But across all the differences of language, background, history, experience, temperament, and outlook (and at times these differences led to sharp and lasting differences of opinion), a partnership of respect and admiration and accomplishment grew among men who knew that at their best they wanted to be, as the first companions had called themselves, "friends in the Lord."

To return to that word "partnership" recurring so persistently in the output of the congregation, its documents set forth, for example, a partnership in the relationship of past and present, of heritage and practice, in the Constitutions and their new Comple-

mentary Norms; a partnership of interrelations among faith and justice and culture and interreligious dialogue in the description of our mission today; a partnership of Jesuit priest and Brother in our one common Jesuit vocation; a partnership in ecumenism and with the laity in mission; a partnership of conversion, appreciation, and ways of striding forward into the future with women in the Church and in civil society; a partnership in the particular dimensions and sectors of our mission, such as communication, the intellectual life, our educational and parish works; a partnership asked to grow among our interprovincial and superprovincial works; a most important partnership in the right to general-congregation participation shared in now by all Jesuits with final vows. Finally, in the concluding document of the congregation, which detailed the characteristics of our way of proceeding, there is a partnership, though of course a most unequal one, between ourselves and the Lord in the "deep personal love" with which those characteristics begin and in the collaboration "in the work of redemption" with which they end.

The partnership of the delegates at the congregation did not come easily. To think otherwise would be to romanticize the congregation. Neither will the partnerships to which the documents call us come easily. To think otherwise would equally be to romanticize ourselves and our activities. But insofar as such partnerships take deeper root and grow, we shall be the better for it as "friends in the Lord" with our brother Jesuits and as "friends in the Lord" with those with whom and for whom we are Jesuits.

To turn now for a moment at the end of these remarks to the man who started it all, Saint Ignatius, you, the readers of STUDIES may be interested in knowing that the Institute of Jesuit Sources has just published a new translation of what is usually known as the "Autobiography." This translation is called *A Pilgrim's Testament: The Memoirs of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. You will find further information about it in the notice-advertisement in this present issue of STUDIES.

Now, onward to the task of burrowing through the seventy-seven days of material that accumulated here in St. Louis while I was over there in Rome. If I should have written to you recently, the letter will come, trust that the letter will come—but more slowly than you or I might have wished.

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor

P.S.: During the summer you, our readers, will receive a special issue of STUDIES containing a set of indexes to STUDIES for the first twenty-five years. This quarter-century compilation, a gift to you from the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, will index all the issues of STUDIES from 1969 to 1993 by title, author, frequency, and subject. I hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

J.W.P., S.J.

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I'D LOVE TO, BUT I DON'T HAVE THE TIME

Jesuits and Leisure

*I have discovered that all human evil stems from one fact alone:
man's inability to sit still.*

—Pascal, *Pensées*

*Nobody ever said from his deathbed, "I wish I had spent more
time on my career."*

—Anonymous

A Place for Leisure?

For the last year or two people have asked what I am writing about for STUDIES. "Leisure," I answer. "Oh, good! [*A roll of the eyes*] Just what I need!" "I'm afraid I might be too busy to read it." "Did you get your tan doing research on this topic?" "Why don't you write on something useful, like economic issues?" "Good! I think it's an important issue for Jesuits." "Sounds good, just don't work too hard on it." The responses reflect some of our reactions to the idea of leisure. (They also reflect the wit and cleverness of our brotherhood.)

This essay, as the reader will see, grows out of my own struggle regarding use of time and finding a balance between work and the rest of life. It owes a lot to friends who said, "Let's do something fun," when I was thinking about finishing off another task. To put this little drama in context, I have to confess to being a very "German" member of the Wisconsin Province.

My aim as I write will be to reflect on the place of leisure in our lives as Jesuits and as Americans approaching the end of the twentieth century. I begin with some of my own story, then argue that mistaken emphases in both our spirituality and our culture make leisure problematic for us. Along the way I present a short class on what economists say about time. Then I suggest responses to our cultural preoccupations and ways of returning to our spiritual roots so as to recapture a place for leisure in our lives.

Rev. Gerard L. Stockhausen, S.J., is associate professor of economics at Creighton University and a member of the Campion House community, the Jesuit house of formation in Omaha. Author of the book Threats of Quotas in International Trade, he has a continuing interest in both trade policy and Catholic social teaching. Father's address is Campion House, 518 North 19th Street, Omaha, NE 68102-4674.

Some of My Story

In June of 1985 I defended my dissertation. Two days later I left for the first summer of tertianship. Within an hour of arriving I received a phone call from the province formation director, asking me to join the staff at Campion House when I arrived at Creighton University at the end of the summer.¹

I arrived as staff member “without portfolio,” the positions of rector, minister, and academic director being already filled by others. Nevertheless, I experienced community obligations—staff meetings, staff sharing, community meetings, house seminar, house jobs, and work days—as cutting into the time I needed to find my way into teaching and figure out what I should be writing, to say nothing of making my way around the campus community generally and the Creighton Jesuit Community as well.

I responded in traditional Jesuit fashion by working days, working nights, working Saturdays, working Sundays, and feeling guilty because I was not doing absolutely everything I thought I should be doing. This was intensified by spending my first summer at Creighton finishing tertianship, and so being unable to get more work done. Being (relatively) young, I was able to maintain the pace, among other reasons because I found most school work interesting and at least some of it enjoyable.

Several things happened to call my lifestyle into question. First, I was living in a house of studies that gave quite a bit of lip service to leisure. The scholastics were restricted to a lighter load than the typical student, in the hope that they would have time to read great literature and indulge their intellectual curiosity. When we as staff took a good look at ourselves, we had to admit that we did not do a good job of modeling the approach to life that we hoped the scholastics would pursue.

More explicitly, for one of our house seminars, the community read and discussed Joseph Pieper’s *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*.² I began asking myself if I ever stopped working long enough to recognize that it was God who held the universe together and that the universe would continue to work quite well even if I did not. I began to ask if there was room for a weekly “sabbath” in my schedule.

In 1989 the staff of Campion House shrank from four to three, and I took on the job of minister without giving up any other responsibilities. For the first month of the new school year, most of my evening and weekend time

¹ For a still-accurate description of Campion House, see Gregory Carlson, S.J., “A Faith Lived out of Doors,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 16, no. 4 (Sept. 1984). (Fr. Carlson returned to Campion House in 1992 as rector.)

² Joseph Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (Scarborough, Ontario: Mentor, New American Library, Mentor-Omega Book, 1963).

went to the minister's job. I kept saying, "As soon as I get everything organized and the year gets under way, this will settle down and it won't take as much time." It soon became clear that it was never going to get better, and I had to admit that I could not do it all. We hired a woman to come in three mornings a week and do the lion's share of what had been the minister's job.

From the day I arrived at Creighton, the Omaha Christian Life Community coordinator would ask me regularly if I would like to be part of a CLC group, and I would always say, "No, I have plenty of sharing and support built into my community life already, and I really can't afford to give up two evenings a month." For some reason, in the spring of 1989, when asked again, I said yes and joined a group of people starting a new CLC group. Over the next year and a half, as some members left and others joined, the group began to take on its own identity. It became an important part of my life, and I wondered how I could have afforded to go for so long without spending my time in such a way. It became clear to me that as busy as I was, I could find time for really important matters. I found that praying and sharing my life on a regular basis with non-Jesuits gave me life as it gave them life. It also put my life in a larger context. Perhaps most important, it provided me with a community that encouraged play.

I decided I could afford to free up one day a week from school work to give myself a sabbath. But my decision resembled Jesus' first attempt to cure the blind man in Mark 8:22-26. I decided not to do academic work on Saturday. This was a weak pledge, since I was already committed to a Saturday afternoon "Mass of Anticipation" every week, either presiding or doing music, and there were often things that took up Saturday mornings. That meant I could do my house work and minister's work on Saturday—it was not academic work, after all—and have all of Sunday cleared out to do school work. I felt I could not afford to take Sunday off, because that would be too expensive in terms of "lost" time. But at least I had made a bow in the direction of leisure, so I could ward off any sense of guilt in that regard.

After a year or so of "taking Saturday off," I realized I was not accomplishing the goal of having leisure if all I was doing was reshuffling my work. I was neither working less nor playing more than before. I decided it was time to make a more serious commitment and free up Sundays from academic work.

What do I do with this wonderful leisure time? At best it allows me to sleep in, enjoy the Sunday papers, have brunch with friends, take a long walk alone or with others, attend a matinee movie or play, plop myself on a sandbar in the Platte River (Omaha suffers from a dearth of beach facilities), play guitar and pray, cook dinner for my community, or curl up with a novel. Sometimes I even read a back issue of *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS*! At the less desirable end of things, it is time to fix things around the house, perform an

archeological dig on my desk, or rearrange the stacks of things that I “should” get to.

Even when I allow Sunday to fill up with busy work, I am still aware that I made a choice that this is to be the Lord’s day. One of the ironies of making such an attempt is that the thought of an open, unplanned Sunday can be scary. It is not surprising that I am tempted to put off all odds and ends during the week just so I will have tasks to fall back on, lest I “waste” the entire day. I have also found that I am not completely comfortable with my sabbath. When I see my brother Jesuits preparing for Monday classes, I start to feel guilty and wonder if I am pulling my fair share.

On the positive side, I often find that I can get as much done in five or six days as I can in seven (although, admittedly, that is not the point), and I can enjoy my work during the week more if the weekend has something to offer besides two more days of work. On those rare occasions when my calendar is not out of control, I try to keep Saturdays free as well, though with mixed success.

What Is Leisure?

Before continuing with my story, let me make a stab at defining leisure, recognizing that it is a slippery concept and that it is easier to say what leisure is not than what it is. I define leisure negatively as time spent or activity undertaken without calculation of duty or accomplishment. It involves “wasting” time in such things as conversation, reading for pleasure, celebration, prayer, worship, or quiet. On the positive side, leisure is activity that is recreating, life giving, humanizing, and divinizing; in a word, it leads to wholeness and healing. Ideally, of course, our work can fit this latter description except that it is ordered at least somewhat toward duty and task.

The trick is to distinguish the wasting of time in leisure from just plain wasting time. Ignatius’s first experience of discerning spirits during his convalescence after the battle of Pamplona may be instructive here. Ignatius found that romantic daydreams left him listless and agitated, whereas fantasies of imitating the saints in doing great deeds for Christ left him peaceful and energized. Similarly, after spending hours watching late-night television or reading spy novels, I feel dazed and often numbed by the violence; I certainly do not feel closer to God or energized for the apostolate. While true leisure activities are not undertaken for any end, not even coming closer to God or being energized for the apostolate, such “by-products” are good indicators that one has been engaged in leisure rather than escapism.

Thus, it is possible that what is leisure for one person may not be for another, or that what is leisure one day may not be the next. For example, at my advanced age I like to pretend I can still play basketball. On some days I

emerge exhilarated from the concentrated effort and joy of the game, eager to return to work or to spend time with others. On other days I emerge downcast from losing or playing poorly (or both), unable to work because I am still replaying my mistakes, and averse to human contact. Similarly, what is a very worthwhile TV show that one person has looked forward to might be for another simply one more in a succession of shows that happen to come on. So another criterion for leisure might involve choice: Is this something one chooses to do for its own sake, or is it something to pass the time because one cannot think of anything better to do?³

Lest this talk of leisure conjure up images of idleness or the jet set searching endlessly for another bit of pleasure, I must state clearly that leisure and work are complementary. Leisure is not the same as an exaggerated focus on self-care that relegates actual work to a distant second place. Leisure's affirmation of all reality includes the affirmation that work gives meaning and dignity to human life. But the affirmation involved in leisure emphasizes as well that work is not all there is to being human, that humanity is greater than that.

Brother, Can You Spare Me a Time?

As I reflect on my own experience of trying to make room for leisure and wonder why it is so difficult to embrace such a good thing, I try to understand the forces that work against leisure. Clearly our attitude toward time is one of those.⁴ Economists treat time (to the extent they even think in those terms) as one more scarce resource to be rationed according to the "laws" of supply and demand. Just as individuals or households can either spend their income or save it, workers face a labor/leisure tradeoff in which they begin with an endowment of hours that they can either "spend" in return for wages and salaries or "save" in the form of leisure.⁵ The number of hours supplied at each possible wage sets the supply of labor, and how much employers want to hire at each possible wage determines the demand for labor. The interaction of supply and demand in each labor market determines the equilibrium wage and

³ Sometimes "vegetating in front of the TV" is about all we are capable of. I am saying that leisure is important, not that all nonwork time must be spent in leisure. However, if one is frequently too tired even to contemplate anything but pure escape, one should probably ask why this is so.

⁴ As is probably already obvious to the reader, my approach (and certainly that of most economists) to time tends to be dominated by the chronological—time as measurable—rather than the "chairotic"—time as the period during which something important happens.

⁵ Leisure here means time not spent in paid employment. That is the only sense of the word that can be measured, and so analyzed within economics. According to Juliet Schor, Americans report an average of 16.5 leisure hours a week (*The Overworked American* [New York: Basic Books, 1992], 1).

hours of work.⁶ In the “microeconomics of the household,” economists go on to analyze, among other things, how people “spend” commuting time in order to “buy” living in an area of their choosing, or how, in making their “fertility decision,” people “spend” child-rearing time in order to “buy” the pleasure of having a child.

That sort of language may be foreign to us and even sound mercenary; but if we examine our language, we find something similar. We spend time, save time, afford time, make time, have time, spare time, give time, keep time, free up time, lose track of time. In other words, we talk about time as though it were a valuable possession. *My* time is scarce, *my* time is short, *my* time is valuable: time is money!⁷ In other words, time has become a commodity, and we are quite comfortable with the concept of buying and selling time.⁸

One pattern in my life reflecting this is that I easily pick up the phone to talk to a friend because I think I cannot afford the time it would take to write a letter. The irony is that I can spend as much time on the phone as it would have taken to write a letter, and at the end I have nothing to show for it except a large phone bill, whereas a letter from another can be saved and reread. I have also found that writing pushes me to express myself clearly, whereas I can easily pass the time on the phone without saying what is most important.

Imagining my reactions in the following situation is another way to see how attached I am to my own time. The story is told of the Jesuit who went to an American Indian reservation to give the resident pastor a summer break. He was told that there was a Mass scheduled at 10 A.M. the following day at the powwow grounds. He arrived with his mass kit at 9:45 and got everything set up, but only one elderly couple were present. About 10:15 the priest went to the couple and asked if they thought he should begin. The reply was, “Well, you could begin now if you want to say Mass by yourself. If you want people

⁶ It of course takes a good bit of extra arguing to explain why the equilibrium always involves forty hours per week. Schor is one of many who argue that this is not a helpful way of looking at things, because firms actually offer forty-hours-a-week jobs that workers can either take or leave. Firms do offer fewer hours, but with no benefits. Schor’s argument is that the huge increases in productivity in this century (it has doubled since 1948) should have given us a choice between more money and more free time, but for a number of reasons firms are not interested in offering that choice (*The Overworked American*, 2, 3, and passim).

⁷ In the novitiate we had “free time”—“*tempus liberum*”—occasionally; but after a lengthy discussion in which some of the brethren argued that time cannot be considered free, the schedules were changed to read simply, “free.”

⁸ Schor and Rifkin (among others) point out that usury is the oldest example of buying and selling time. See Schor, *The Overworked American*, 140, and Jeremy Rifkin, *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1987), 1.

here, you'll probably have to wait until they come." Sure enough, an hour or so later, people began to arrive, and by noon the Mass began.

Staffan Linder, a Swedish economist, has an explanation for the difference in the valuation of time in industrial and preindustrial societies.⁹ In preindustrial societies, such as most Third World countries today—or in the Middle Ages, when people enjoyed as many as 115 holidays in a year¹⁰—the goal of most people is subsistence, made more difficult because there is not enough work to keep even a sizable percentage of the able-bodied fully employed. People from industrial societies—where time is highly valued—look at these societies and often admire their much more casual approach to time. They see people who can take several days to celebrate a wedding or a funeral properly, for example, rather than trying to fit it into an evening or a weekend so as not to interfere with work. Linder argues that this is not due so much to cultural values, however, as to the paucity of work to be done. In other words, the time of people who have no paying jobs has little value, so the cost to them of “wasting” that time—in celebrations or just sitting around—is very small. So in preindustrial societies it is not extravagant to spend time that has little market value, whereas in industrial societies we calculate that we cannot afford to spend much of our more valuable time on these activities.

Of course, it does not take long in even a semitropical environment to realize that without air conditioning human beings simply cannot do hard physical work for extended periods of time. The mixture of sweat and humidity make paper work equally challenging. The climate thus demands a leisurely approach to life—including resting during the hottest part of the day—and does not permit the more strenuous activities possible in more temperate lands.

The question of how valuable we think our time is faces every community when the members decide which household tasks they will do for themselves and which they will pay others to do for them (and, of course, what wages they are willing to pay). We face this question again in deciding whether to live where we work or at some distance from our work.

Despite my vow of poverty, I have just as much time as the wealthiest person in the world. Yet, of the creatures that I claim as my own, there are few to which I cling more tightly than to “my” time. I am always jealous of my time. Even if it is a weekend and I have nothing else planned, I resist any request that comes my way because it cuts into “my” time.

⁹ Staffan Burenstam Linder, *The Harried Leisure Class* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

¹⁰ The United States today has about half the holidays that European countries do, yet we have been persuaded that this is a good thing because it makes us “more competitive” than the “unrealistic” and “inefficient” Europeans with their strong unions and high levels of social spending.

Leisure is impossible if I am calculating how much time it will take.¹¹ Leisure can well be described as “wasting” time with those one loves. For most people, much of leisure is family time, but we religious often do not live with those dearest to us, seeing them only in vacation situations. In our ordinary lives, then, leisure can be less attractive because we are often faced with the choice of doing something by ourselves or going out of our way to find someone to take leisure with. When asked to accompany another to some activity, many (most?) Jesuits will typically evaluate the suggested activity rather than respond to the other’s offer of some shared time. Thus Joe Jesuit says, “Let’s go see such-and-such a movie,” and John Jesuit replies, “I heard it wasn’t so good.” (The deflated offer is left at Joe’s feet. It takes a strong self to pick it up and ask another.) Only rarely does John Jesuit say, “I’m not too interested in that, but how about if we spend some time together doing something else?”

On the other hand, if time—to say nothing of one’s entire life—is a gift, then receiving it freely allows one to give it freely. Leisure can be a way of receiving time gratefully.¹² Joseph Pieper suggests making a “holocaust” of time, returning some of it to God much the way Deuteronomy 26 mandates the offering of unblemished first fruits of the field and flock, “wasting” it as one does a libation.¹³ I fear that the thought of taking perfectly good and useful time—not just leftover time when I lack the energy to do anything else—and “wasting” it in celebration is enough to take the breath away from most red-blooded American Jesuits. One test of this is our approach to liturgy and shared prayer. Most communities have great difficulty finding time for common prayer. And who of us has never once complained because an Easter Vigil, Christmas Midnight Mass, or ordination “went too long”?

Ignatian Spirituality versus Leisure

It is true that our attitude toward time makes leisure difficult, but underneath that attitude is a spirituality ordered to apostolic work. It is this that makes leisure problematic for most Jesuits (and probably most religious). They do not work in order to feed and clothe and provide for a family. They have given their whole lives to God as a holocaust, not just a few hours. Their work is service, it is ministry. So when more is asked of them, the appropriate response is to give generously. From this point of view, taking time for themselves sounds selfish and un-Jesuit.

¹¹ This section owes much to a discussion of this topic by the Assistancy Seminar at its September 1993 meeting in Omaha.

¹² John Foley, S.J., presents a fine image of this dynamic of receiving and giving in his “Stepping into the River,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 26, no. 5 (Sept. 1994).

¹³ Joseph Pieper, “What Is a Feast?” in *What Is a Feast?* (Waterloo, Ontario: North Waterloo Academic Press, 1987), 6.

This is not surprising, since the Spiritual Exercises themselves can seem to be the antithesis of leisure. For example, the Principle and Foundation (§23) begins, "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls."¹⁴ We tend to understand the praise, reverence, and service of God as using the gifts God has given us for the service of God's people. If there are people in need of my gifts when I am off engaging in leisure, then am I not contradicting the end for which I was made and using those gifts poorly?

Similarly, the colloquy for the exercises of the First Week presents three questions: "What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I to do for Christ?" (§53). It does not ask how I have rested, am resting, and ought to rest. Leisure seems to be the opposite of the labors to which the companions of Christ are invited in the meditation on the Kingdom (§§92–98). In the face of this, leisure seems to smack of comfort and an easy life, the opposite of what we see ourselves having chosen as Jesuits.

This same sense continues with the Two Standards. We align ourselves with Jesus in poverty and humility, standing against Satan and the allure of riches, honors, and pride (§§140–47). It is hard not to associate rest and leisure with a "leisure class," those who are more under Satan's banner than Christ's. This sense is reinforced still more by meditating on the Three Classes of Persons and Three Modes of Humility, and being drawn to the *magis*: What more can I do for Christ? This is not the stance of someone caught up in self-care, in taking breaks, in being leisurely; it is the stance of one who is always ready to give, no matter the cost.

In sum, I think for many Jesuits the work of their apostolate is their first priority, and at best leisure fits into their lives if it helps their work. At worst, leisure is seen as the opposite of work, and work is what we as Jesuits are about. Leisure has connotations of being soft and focused on self, and we see ourselves as strong and forgetful of self. It is, of course, tempting to get out a mirror here and ask to what extent our actual lives measure up to our rhetoric, to ask how well the thrust of the Exercises is revealed in our food and drink and rooms, our TV watching and recreation and villas. Even if we do not live up to our ideals, however, our self-image and our rhetoric—the words we use to talk about our spirituality—hugely affect our willingness to consider a place for leisure in our lives.

When leisure does not have negative connotations, it still has the sense of something that does not quite fit our lives. We may say, for example, that a leisurely approach to life may be fine for monastic or contemplative communi-

¹⁴ The translation of *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* was made by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992). References are to the traditional marginal numbers.

ties, with their lives built around the liturgy of the hours.¹⁵ But we insist that we are contemplatives *in action*; we tend to put the emphasis on the action, not the contemplation; and we certainly would not put the emphasis on leisure.

This sense of ourselves, whether or not it is actually played out in every corner of our individual or community lives, certainly lives on in our ideals, in how we think we ought to live. Even more, that is how we picture our Jesuit heroes: they were tireless workers. We picture Ignatius studying, enlisting followers, engaging in spiritual conversation with donors, walking all over Europe, starting a house for prostitutes, fending off trouble from the hierarchy, writing the Constitutions and volumes of letters. We picture Xavier on hard voyages, baptizing every (willing) person in sight, studying languages, taking the Gospel to India, Japan, and the doorway to China, establishing churches, on his knees writing to Ignatius. And we picture Canisius founding college after college, preaching, writing, constantly crisscrossing central Europe and single-handedly winning back half of it to the Church. Our image of the early Jesuits might be summed up in the Prayer for Generosity: "To give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I am doing your most holy will." These were men of action who could think and act on a grand scale; it sounds almost offensive to speak of them as men of leisure.

American Culture versus Leisure

My thesis is that there is more to the story. It is not just the way we can overemphasize one side of our spirituality, but the way that our self-identity is embedded in American culture that makes leisure problematic. I discovered this when I tried to move out of that culture. In August of 1991 I started a sabbatical teaching at the national university in Kampala, Uganda. Campus unrest the two previous years had thrown off the university calendar, so that classes did not start until mid-November. In addition, due to various circumstances, I ended up teaching only one course, and that one not terribly different from one I usually teach at Creighton. Once classes finally started, there was a two-week break at Christmas, a three-week break at Easter, and an expectation that classes would stop meeting two weeks before finals so that there would be plenty of time for students to "revise." In other words, I came from a situation in which I taught three courses each semester, but here I found myself with nothing to do for two and a half months. Even then I taught only one course for the equivalent of a semester and a half.

¹⁵ Ironically, Thomas Merton complains about workaholicism and the busy life even in the monastery (*Contemplation in a World of Action* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971], 34f.).

What happened inside of me? I felt guilty because I was not working full-time. In addition, the salary I was getting started at about \$50 per month. (It later increased to \$100 per month.) That did not come close to covering room and board. I was embarrassed to be unable to pay my way in the Jesuit community to which I belonged. I found plenty of Masses on campus, helped with music when I was not presiding, did lots of reading, and took on other projects so as to look busy at least.

I knew exactly what was going on. I knew I was valuing myself according to how much work I was doing and how much money I was making. I also knew that God loves me no matter what my job or salary, but that did not keep me from feeling inadequate.¹⁶ I kept telling myself that this was part of my American cultural baggage. But in prayer I still found myself asking if I was really good enough, doing enough, measuring up. That experience tells me what a strong grip my culture's value system has on me, even though in my head I reject it and understand that it is contrary to the Gospel.

What do I mean by this culture's value system? We live in a culture that values efficiency and productivity above all. Much of our identity and most of our self-worth come from what we do. In our culture generally, people are valued according to how productive they are, and their productivity is theoretically reflected in how much money they earn. Even in times of high unemployment, a person without a job is seriously suspect.¹⁷ This way of evaluating people has been in the air we breathe all our lives. It is part of our Jesuit way of thinking whether we like it or not. When we come to the Spiritual Exercises with these cultural presuppositions already well in place, we hear and understand our Jesuit spirituality accordingly. In other words, we come with a value system that puts efficiency and productivity at the top of the list; we go through the Exercises and are moved to service, doing for Christ and laboring with Christ; but in terms of our cultural values already in place, we understand this service and doing and laboring as being productive and efficient apostles. So the ideal of service comes from our spirituality, especially the Exercises; but the norms by which we judge the productivity and efficiency of that service—and therefore ourselves and one another—come from our culture. And in the process, rather than questioning our cultural values, we conclude by baptizing them, to the point that we have difficulty separating the cultural values from the spiritual ideals.

¹⁶ As numbers dwindle and money is needed to support houses and retired members, this can become a serious concern, especially in orders of women religious.

¹⁷ People who lose their jobs often lose their friends as well. When a job provides identity, what do you talk about with someone who has no job? See John C. Raines and Donna C. Day-Lower, *Modern Work and Human Meaning* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 42.

Let me go out on a limb and ask whether it is not precisely this baptizing of cultural values that people find attractive in Jesuits. We are admired for combining idealism and realism, but the danger is that the realism (on which we pride ourselves) is really no different from the high value that our culture puts on productivity and efficiency. Thus, one often hears people (businessmen?) say something along these lines: "I like you Jesuits; you are close to God, but you are also hardheaded and talk my language." What is the language that is being talked here? And is the medium/language any different from the message? Have we misread our spiritual roots to the point that we "go in their door" and stay there?

This is difficult material because it deals with our sense of self, of who we are and whether we are valuable, lovable persons. A month after returning from Uganda, I made my annual retreat. At our first meeting, my director told me to do nothing. I was not to do any formal prayer or spiritual reading, or even open the Bible. I could walk or sleep or exercise. I could just sit quietly. It was hard because I was on retreat and for me that meant praying and working on my spiritual life, working on my relationship with God. I reported the next morning that, although I felt a bit disoriented, I had actually enjoyed the day of doing nothing, but that I also felt guilty because I should be praying on retreat. He asked me, "Does God still love you even though you aren't earning his love by doing all the things one 'should' do on retreat?" I had to admit that it was difficult to be convinced of this, and that I feel most worthwhile when I can point to what I have accomplished. He told me to keep doing nothing until I could be comfortable just knowing I was in God's presence and loved by God even though I could not demonstrate how hard I was giving myself to the retreat. Let God do the self-giving.

I do not think I am untypical in the way I reacted to this retreat. Retreat should be a time when we can step outside of the need to be doing and accomplishing, but even there we feel a need to justify to ourselves (or to somebody) this time away. Perhaps this is because to our hard-working non-Jesuit contemporaries this looks like unproductive time or another vacation. What would it be to truly take a "vacation with the Lord?" Could I simply spend eight days praising God, rejoicing in God's gifts, delighting in creation? Could I bring no agenda to the retreat except to be quiet enough that if God has an agenda, I could hear it?

My retreat experience highlights the work orientation that we pick up from our American culture and tend to baptize as we pray through the Spiritual Exercises. It is important to challenge the high value our culture puts on productivity, because if productivity is what gives people value, then the unemployed, the elderly (*orat pro Soc.*), the sick, those with various physical, mental, or emotional disabilities (*cur. val.*) lose value to the extent they cannot or do not work (*expect. dest.*). And if productivity is what gives value, then the

actions of caring for those people, time spent with friends and family, and even prayer itself have no value either.

When we get caught up in placing too high a value on work and productivity, we often come to believe that we have value only when we are being productive, or at least working. Couple this with the idealism and desire to serve which is part of our spirituality, and we can find ourselves believing that the ideal Jesuit is one who works constantly. Moving toward perfection can mean doing more and more work and avoiding anything that looks like wasting time. And "wasting time" applies to any activity that is not productive.

At the extreme, such a Jesuit can also begin to judge others and their activities as being not sufficiently productive. Whereas others might see his approach to work as compulsive and workaholic, he will see himself as a model Jesuit, living up to the highest ideals of the order. He will see himself as one who works hard, is generous and always available, always willing to take on another task for the sake of Christ. For this Jesuit to slow down, to take time off (to say nothing of taking a sabbatical), is not just a matter of rearranging his schedule: it is to call into question his whole sense of self-worth. Since taking a break is to be unproductive and therefore no longer have value, asking this Jesuit to slow down is taking away the only thing in his life that gives him meaning and value. Each of us knows some Jesuits like this, and most of us are to some extent infected by this disease.

In inviting us into tertianship in 1985, Lawrence Gillick suggested that many Jesuits have internalized a message like one of the following: "Since I am not holy, I will work hard instead"; or, "My interior life is a disaster; but if I feel bad enough about myself and work hard enough, maybe I will be saved in the end." Workaholism and the loss of leisure are perhaps more of a danger for those whose work consists of serving others (or simply who see their work as service). If work is service and more service is better, then more work is better; and even what started out as nonuseful leisure gets incorporated into the world of work. Thus, what we call leisure becomes simply a break which allows us to work harder and better. Nonwork time becomes an occasion to catch up on the pile of things I "should" read. Private prayer is no longer time "wasted" with God, but time to work on personal improvement, the break that gets me through the day, space to organize the day or plan my calendar, opportunity for Scripture study or homily preparation.¹⁸ And public prayer, the Eucharist, for example, rather than being a celebration of God's goodness, becomes something I do for people, opportunity for catechesis, time to raise others' consciousness

¹⁸ I want to raise questions rather than judge anyone here. See "Jesuits Praying," *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 21, no. 5 (Nov. 1989), the one-hundredth-anniversary issue of that publication. Several of the writers describe how they have found a path to prayer by ignoring some of the "should's" they were taught about prayer. Even when breaking the "rules," however, they do not evaluate their prayer by what they accomplished.

or expose them to issues, or even a way to support our works through the stipends it brings.

A delightful little story invites us to see that even thinking about work is out of place during sabbath time.

A certain pious man once went into his vineyard on the Sabbath and saw there a break in its wall. He decided to repair it when the Sabbath was over, but afterward he said, "Since I decided on the Sabbath that I would repair it, I shall never do so at all." What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do for that man? He prepared a caper-bush which grew into the opening, and the man supported himself off that bush for the rest of his life.¹⁹

Where Has All Our Leisure Gone?

In an earlier section I talked about an economic approach to time. To begin to respond to this cultural valuation of people and work, I suggest that we look at an economic explanation for the loss of leisure and some of its results. In *The Harried Leisure Class*, Linder points out that from the time of the industrial revolution people have assumed that technological progress would free people to cultivate the arts and enjoy real leisure. That clearly has not happened. Linder's analysis suggests that in affluent countries and in the presence of a great deal of machinery and new technologies, the time people spend doing the work they get paid for has become very productive, and pay scales reflect that productivity. Once people experience the productivity of their work time—both what they can accomplish and the money their work brings them—they use that to determine what their time is "worth," and therefore how much enjoyment they have to get out of their free time to make it "worth while." If free time cannot do at least as much for them, they might as well go back to work.

How does free time become more productive? Just as work time is more productive if it yields more output, free time is more productive if it yields more pleasure, enjoyment, stimulation, "fun." Just as work time becomes more productive when additional and more powerful machines (capital goods) are used, so free time becomes more productive when additional and fancier toys (consumption goods) are used.

Thus, for example, rather than spending a summer afternoon watching a single ball game outside, I could make use of air conditioning, cable TV, and remote control to watch several games at once in the coolness of my own house (with my popcorn maker and well-stocked refrigerator close by, of course).

¹⁹ Robert Goldenberg, "The Place of the Sabbath in Rabbinic Judaism," in Tamara C. Eskenai, Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., and William H. Shea, eds., *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 35.

If free time is not providing enough enjoyment, people must either work more and play less or else acquire more and/or better consumption goods; but the cost of those goods also requires more work. It takes time to enjoy consumption goods, and one cannot enjoy them all at the same time, so one has to divide the available time among them. Since the level of enjoyment tends to fall off if one keeps doing the same thing for longer periods, people end up with more leisure-time activities, using more consumption goods for shorter periods of time. Of course, enjoyment attained by piling up consumer goods is hardly the kind of leisure that Joseph Pieper would say is the basis of culture, nor the way of keeping holy the sabbath that Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 had in mind.

The end point of Linder's argument, however, is that instead of providing more time for prayer, the arts, or quiet time alone or with others, our affluent, high-productivity culture actually affords less and less time for such pursuits. He reasons as follows. This more contemplative use of leisure time almost by definition does not involve much in the way of consumption goods. Therefore, the enjoyment or pleasure one can gain from leisure time is constant; it cannot be increased. On the other hand, the enjoyment or pleasure gained from recreational time can be increased by using additional and more sophisticated consumption goods. Therefore, people will experience consumption-augmented recreational time as more valuable than plain old leisure time, and leisure will get crowded out of their schedules. Furthermore, if the value of work time is rising as well, both work and recreation will cut into the time given to activities that cultivate the soul.

One could, I suppose, try to get more out of prayer time by buying the latest best-sellers on prayer, a gold-leaf lectionary, and the best possible prayer chair, lavishly decorating one's prayer space, using expensive incense and prayer candles, and listening to appropriate music on one's state-of-the-art compact-disc player; but it is hard to imagine genuine prayer that would not call into question such an approach.

Linder points out an additional result of all this: Paying for more new goods and the maintenance of old ones requires ever more income. This leads to a society preoccupied with the economic growth that will provide that growing income, to the point that growth becomes an end rather than a means: society becomes willing to sacrifice more and more to growth. Distribution questions are ignored, the average work week no longer shrinks, and we focus on growth rather than the resulting pollution and other social ills.

Linder wrote at a time of optimism, when it was thinkable that all jobs would be "good" jobs: technological growth would do away with menial tasks, and people choosing to work more would not find that an oppressive choice. Linder thus misses another dynamic more related to menial, monotonous work. People whose work is neither satisfying nor valued by society are forced to get most of their self-worth from their nonwork time, asserting the value of their

work by what they can consume. If their work is alienating, recreation and escape will be much more attractive than leisure.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops pick up this theme.

Leisure is connected to the whole of one's value system and influenced by the general culture one lives in. It can be trivialized into boredom and laziness, or end in nothing but a desire for greater consumption and waste. For disciples of Christ, the use of leisure may demand being countercultural. The Christian tradition sees in leisure time to build family and societal relationships and an opportunity for communal prayer and worship, for relaxed contemplation and enjoyment of God's creation, and for the cultivation of the arts which help fill the human longing for wholeness. . . . In the creation narrative God worked six days to create the world and rested on the seventh. We must take that image seriously and learn how to harmonize action and rest, work and leisure, so that both contribute to building up the person as well as the family and community.²⁰

This leads them to ask these questions:

In this consumer society, how can I develop a healthy detachment from things and avoid the temptation to assess who I am by what I have? How do I strike a balance between labor and leisure that enlarges my capacity for friendships, for family life, for community?²¹

Tibor Scitovsky looks at economic activity from the viewpoint of psychology.²² From that literature he argues that human beings experience pain from too much sensory arousal (for example, from hunger, thirst, heat, or cold) as well as from too little arousal—from boredom. In order to avoid pain, they seek medium states of arousal, continually satisfying their wants, which Scitovsky calls comfort. By way of contrast, he notes that pleasure involves moving between levels of arousal, as when hunger or boredom is relieved. This means that comfort precludes pleasure. Pleasure involves the stimulation of change, variety, surprise, or novelty, which reside mostly in human action and imagination and often have positive side effects (one person's enjoyment of them makes life better for those nearby) and can be shared without loss. Comfort and want-satisfaction, usually requiring ever more consumption and energy use, often have negative side effects (one person's enjoyment of them makes life worse for those nearby) and are less easily shared.

²⁰ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Letter *Economic Justice for All* (Washington: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1986), ¶338.

²¹ Ibid., ¶23.

²² Tibor Scitovsky, *The Joyless Economy: The Psychology of Human Satisfaction*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). The quotation from Pascal with which I began my essay appears on page vii of this book.

People thus consume ever more but fail to find happiness. Polls show that despite huge increases in consumption, Americans are no happier now than they were in 1957.²³ The inability to be leisurely not only blocks happiness and pleasure, it also leads to a desire for more consumption, and therefore more economic growth, resulting in great cost to the environment. Dennis Hamm has recently put out an invitation to a renewed Sabbath experience not only to give ourselves a rest but to give the earth a rest as well.²⁴ True leisure activities will put little strain on this earth's scarce resources or its capacity to absorb pollution. Pope John Paul II reflects on this in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*.

Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. (§37)

Leisure and Work

What response can leisure make to this culture driven by work? After my year in Uganda, I returned to the value that a busy life confers, to the safety and comfort of my full-time job at Creighton and my responsibilities as minister and member of the staff at Campion House, needing to make more sense of my African experience and wanting to take leisure more seriously—if that is not an oxymoron—(and to work at writing this essay on leisure). Of course, our community continued to discuss leisure in one of our house seminars each year. Joseph Pieper's thoughts helped me put these ideas together a bit better.

Pieper attacks our tendency to load all our value on work. He explicitly defines leisure in contrast to the culture of "total work."

Leisure . . . is a mental and spiritual attitude. . . .

Compared with the exclusive ideal of work as activity, leisure implies . . . an attitude of non-activity, of inward calm, of silence; it means not being "busy," but letting things happen. . . .

Compared with the exclusive ideal of work as toil, leisure appears . . . in its character as an attitude of contemplative "celebration." . . . Leisure is possible only on the premise that man consent to his own true nature and abides in concord with the meaning of the universe. . . .

. . . [L]eisure stands opposed to the exclusive ideal of work qua social function. . . . Leisure does not exist for the sake of work. . . .

²³ Schor, *The Overworked American*, 115.

²⁴ Dennis Hamm, S.J., "Reinventing the Sabbath," *Review for Religious* 51, no. 5 (Sept.–Oct. 1992): 721–32.

*The point and the justification of leisure are not that the functionary should function faultlessly and without a breakdown, but that the functionary should continue to be a man.*²⁵

By way of contrast, Michael Novak, in extolling the wonders of capitalism, celebrates the godlike creativity involved in producing and marketing. He criticizes the Western philosophical and theological tradition (represented by Pieper) as aristocratic in preferring the nonuseful to the useful and thereby devaluing the activities that the majority of humankind depend on for survival. As a result, says Novak, economics has regarded this tradition as "unrealistic and irrelevant."²⁶ Novak hopes his focus on creativity will rejoin economics to theology and philosophy. Novak might argue that Pieper has nothing to say to people who have to work double jobs and overtime in order to make ends meet. Pieper would respond that survival is not an end in itself, that making it an end leaves out leisure and thereby robs people of their humanity.

For Novak, finding God in all things means primarily celebrating God present in the creative process of human work. Pieper would not deny that, but says that such celebration cannot take place within the context of work and calculation: it needs the context of leisure. Useful work exists for leisure, and humanity and human creativity (to say nothing of the divine) are much greater than useful work.

For Pieper, two things are necessary for leisure. It has to be nonuseful, and it must involve some sense of celebration. Leisure is activity that has value in itself, that is not useful for accomplishing some other purpose. Pieper argues against "the overestimation of the value of work."²⁷ He says we tend to be suspicious of anything that comes without effort: "No pain, no gain." "You've got to bear the cross if you want to wear the crown." Pieper sees humans as uncomfortable benefiting from anything they did not earn. As long as they keep working hard, they can try to convince themselves that they have earned what comes their way. Leisure—activity that does not earn anything or involve any calculation of what is coming to whom—breaks out of the work focus and enables us to recognize that time and all else is gift, not remuneration.

Pieper admits that people cannot be persuaded to engage in something that has no use: "You cannot convert people to leisure by telling them how

²⁵ Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 40–44. Emphasis added.

²⁶ Michael Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 105f. To put the best light on Novak, I think he would not so much deny the "higher" virtues as argue that in emphasizing them the tradition has taken the "lower" virtues of ordinary commerce for granted, whereas the latter can no longer be taken for granted and so need emphasis in our day.

²⁷ Pieper, "On Leisure," 57.

wholesome and beneficial it is.”²⁸ The heart of leisure is celebration; and we celebrate, not because celebrating is good for us (even though it is), but because life is good. If our conviction is that the world is at root evil, or even neutral, then there is nothing to celebrate. We cannot celebrate without affirming the goodness of the world and assenting to our oneness with the world. In the end, leisure leads to worship.

The liturgy teaches us to have grateful hearts: to thank God for the gift of life, the gift of this earth, and the gift of all people. It turns our hearts from self-seeking to a spirituality that sees the signs of true discipleship in our sharing of goods and working for justice. By uniting us in prayer with all the people of God, with the rich and the poor, with those near and dear, and with those in distant lands, liturgy challenges our way of living and refines our values.²⁹

Since leisure presumes celebration of God's presence in all of reality, there is such a close connection between prayer and leisure that encouraging leisure can sound like encouraging prayer. That is not necessarily my intent here. Both Edward Kinerk and Frank Houdek, writing on Jesuit prayer, show that beyond the basics St. Ignatius did not want Jesuits extending prayer time.³⁰ He wanted scholastics' prayer to include Mass plus one hour for all other spiritual exercises. He set no length of time for those with final vows and resisted tendencies to imitate the length of prayer customary in the more monastic religious orders. What Ignatius desired for his followers was that they find God in all things, not just in time set aside for prayer.

It is interesting to note, however, that both Kinerk and Houdek, in calling attention to Ignatius's minimalism with regard to required prayer and emphasizing the “in action” of our vocation as contemplatives in action, call for a rhythm in our lives that leaves time for solitude in the midst of our activity.³¹ Houdek goes on to suggest some sources of prayer flowing out of our own active lives, sources that he labels community, emptiness, conscience, beauty, and evil. The last two are particularly appropriate to this consideration of leisure.

It is obvious that many leisure activities, especially those connected with the arts, with nature, and with other people, provide us with experiences of beauty which easily lead us to God. As good as it is that such activities can

²⁸ Ibid., 64.

²⁹ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, ¶331.

³⁰ E. Edward Kinerk, S.J., “When Jesuits Pray: A Perspective on the Prayer of Apostolic Persons,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 17, no. 2 (Nov. 1984), and Frank J. Houdek, S.J., “Jesuit Prayer and Jesuit Ministry: Context and Possibilities,” *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 24, no. 1 (Jan. 1992).

³¹ Kinerk, “When Jesuits Pray,” 15; Houdek, “Jesuit Prayer and Jesuit Ministry,” 20f., 34f.

provide material for prayer, however, we must ever bear in mind that leisure activities by definition have no end outside themselves. I do not pause to enjoy a beautiful sunset or a piece of music because it will help my prayer later, but because it is beautiful. The fact that it draws me to God is welcome; and as I grow in my ability to find God in all things, it becomes harder to separate my appreciation of the creature from my appreciation of the creator. Nevertheless, part of the celebration of leisure is that God put many creatures in this world that are good in themselves, and leisure time provides an opportunity to immerse myself in them.

Does leisure have to do only with beauty and goodness and happy things? Could evil also be part of leisure? The quick answer is that leisure provides time to cultivate art and literature, and that includes Picasso's *Guernica* and Solzenitsyn's description of the gulag, as well as the great tragedies of Euripides or Shakespeare. Houdek suggests that experiences of evil can be sources of prayer because they remind us of what is missing in our world and inspire us to turn to God as we make choices which respond to that evil. While experiences of evil may lead us to prayer, I would categorize as leisure only those that are presented with some aesthetic sense. Both *Macbeth* and the latest "action thriller coming to a theater near you" present the viewer with a blood-bath; but while the stance of the former is horror at the unraveling of humanity and the carnage that flows from an initial act of greed and violence, the latter glories in the bloodshed and presents it as the appropriate response to a world without humanity. Far from affirming the rightness of creation, the latter affirms creation as violent and sinful, thereby justifying and even canonizing the hero even as he (usually male) becomes less human. While it may bring a kind of release, it leaves nothing to celebrate, and even contributes to the fear and suspicion that divide us.

Back to the Spiritual Exercises

If making a place for leisure in our lives can be a valuable response to a disordered part of our culture, can we overcome the leanings within our spirituality that make us reluctant to embrace leisure? There is certainly room in our tradition for a focus that is not solely on work. I am always amazed when I come across accounts of the deliberation of the first companions of St. Ignatius. In the face of pressing needs and many demands upon their time, they devoted all their evenings for three months to making a good decision. And the decision-making process involved spending at least as much time in prayer as in discussion. One might argue that the outcome of the deliberation was to choose to entrust future decisions to one of their number, so as to avoid having to go through the ordeal again (except for the rare general congregation). Nevertheless, it reflects a prodigality with regard to time that we would be hard put to find in our contemporary society.

It is also surprising that we ascribe such a work ethic to Ignatius, a mystic who was so caught up in tears it took him two hours to say Mass. John Padberg quotes Ribadeneira's description of Ignatius while he was general, sitting on the roof and gazing at the night sky, tears flowing down his cheeks.³² Padberg also describes Ignatius's dedication to villa. "In spite of heavy financial difficulties, he arranged to buy for the community a country house or villa, *La Vigna*, the Vineyard. He provided for it well and he organized the games there."³³ This is not the description of someone consumed by productivity and accomplishment.

Another of the early companions, Claude Jay, wrote this to Peter Canisius:

I think it unwise to be glued constantly to books and always to be up to your ears in activity. As the soul of the body is robbed of its vitality by the importunate demands of work, so the spirit and fire of God, dampened down by the hustle and bustle of external business, eventually is extinguished. Therefore I press you to take time out not only from your preaching but also from interior debates within your mind and heart so that you may hear God in that silence in which he reveals himself. The man who without respite sweats over books is not always the one who makes the greatest headway.³⁴

How can we retrieve from our spiritual tradition nourishment for a life of leisure? (After all that has been said, "a life of leisure" still offends the ear.) I earlier suggested that the Spiritual Exercises could seem to be opposed to leisure. Here I propose a different reading.

In *Spiritual Exercises* St. Ignatius describes spiritual exercises as "any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul" (§1). In annotations 1, 5, 15, 16, and 20, the goal of seeking only the will of God is repeated. At the heart of the Exercises is indifference, waiting for God's will to be revealed rather than rushing off with the presumption that we know what God wants. Ignatius's point is that when we presume to know what God wants, we may be following our disordered affections, which rob us of freedom. Among my inordinate attachments might be either workaholism or laziness. The will of God for me may well involve hard work, but seeking and finding the will of God happen as

³² John W. Padberg, S.J., "Personal Experience and the Spiritual Exercises: The Example of Saint Ignatius," *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 10, no. 5 (Nov. 1978): 307.

³³ *Ibid.*, 318.

³⁴ William V. Bangert, S.J., *Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmerón: Two Early Jesuits* (Chicago: Loyola University Press), 85f.

my relationship with God grows. Just as with any human friendship, that growth requires leisure time spent together.

Our vocation as Jesuits involves us intimately with our world. The danger is that we take on the values and ways of thinking of our world, as I have said before, and begin to evaluate our ministry and the people we work with and for in terms of efficiency and productivity. We become interested in getting quickly to the heart of the matter, the bottom line, and we lose patience with dialogue and tending to a process. In ¶2 of the *Exercises*, Ignatius lets us know that we have entered a different world. The quick and efficient approach of explaining everything may save time and move the retreatant along more quickly, but letting the retreatant discover things, however slowly and clumsily, is what accomplishes the goal. This conclusion is reinforced in ¶4: The retreat cannot be forced into a schedule, but moves from one Week to the next only when the time is ripe.

I think our tendency in the *Exercises* is often to jump ahead of Ignatius, make our self-offering, and move on—get going because there is work to be done. But the way of Christ that we seek to imitate is clearly not the way of efficiency and productivity leading to worldly success. Even to make the election (the choice of what to do with one's life according to the will of God or how to live better a choice already made) the goal of the Second Week is to make this prayer experience too "outcome oriented." The goal of the Second Week is primarily to take on the mind and heart of Christ so that one can then choose the *magis*—what is more for the praise and glory of God.

The danger here is making the *magis* substantive, in the sense that we keep choosing to engage in more activities and take on more projects because that "more" will give glory to God. Instead, we are to choose whatever will give God greater glory, and that may well be to do less or to say no to some requests rather than to assume that more is always better. Otherwise, we are in danger of using the values we have taken on from the world around us to decide that more service means working more, working harder, being more efficient and more productive. In so doing we miss the whole point of the Principle and Foundation, namely, that more work or less work, harder work or easier work, are among those pairs concerning which we are to be indifferent.

Perhaps this can be summed up by suggesting that the instructions on penance in ¶89 could be applied to our work as well. Rather than encouraging the retreatant to do many great penances, Ignatius encourages experimentation, now doing more and now doing less, until God reveals the amount that is most suitable for each individual. Ignatius stirs up the retreatant's eagerness for generous self-giving, but then channels that eagerness into the freedom of

indifference.³⁵ So it is not what I do that is important, but whether or not what I do is what God desires.

Joseph Conwell, in talking about the criteria for the choice of Jesuit ministries, makes it clear that harder is not better.

Again, if the works are of equal importance, urgency, and need, it is better to choose an easier one that can be quickly dispatched than to pick some work that is more difficult and takes a longer time before any fruit is produced. Ignatius does not choose the harder for the sake of the harder. The Jesuit kamikaze is not bent on suicide. *Agere contra* is a principle for handling the rebelliousness of one's own nature, not a norm for choosing ministries.³⁶

The culmination of the Exercises is the Contemplation to Attain Love (§§230–37). It not only crowns the experience of the Exercises, but leads the retreatant back into daily life aware of God's presence in all of created reality. The retreatant returns to daily life as a companion of Jesus, walking with him. Jesus is not looking for slaves who are valuable for their work but then discarded when they can no longer work. Jesus wants companions who share everything—sorrows and joys, disappointments and hopes, death and life.

We have received many gifts useful for ministry, and in gratitude we want to make a return by using them well. But God's gifts go so far beyond the useful that the only appropriate response is one of wonder. As we receive God's whole self, we are invited to make a gift of our whole selves—not just our work and productivity, but everything. We are invited to stand before the Lord of heaven and earth with open hands and arms and hearts, to receive everything and give everything. God wants not just our hands and back and brains, but our hearts and souls as well, in relationship.

A friend of mine tells of the frustration of trying to give her mother a gift. No matter how hard she tries to find just the right thing, her mother looks at it, says, "That's nice," then sets it aside and says, "Now, what was I saying?" I wonder how often God gets frustrated trying to find the right gift for us. We have the beauty of creation, the beauty of family and friends, the wonder of people in their complexity and brokenness, the mystery that is our own life, and even random acts of kindness. "That's nice; now, what was I doing?" The giver likes the gift to be appreciated and the giver likes to be appreciated. It is hard to imagine that God is different from us in that respect.

³⁵ Ignatius uses the same approach in his famous letter to the scholastics at Coimbra, in which he begins by appealing to their generosity and desire to engage in great works of public piety and penance, only to tell them to use that fervor in their studies and to obey the superior in all things (William J. Young, S.J., trans, *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959], 120–30).

³⁶ Joseph Conwell, S.J., "The Kamikaze Factor: Choosing Jesuit Ministries," *STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS* 11, no. 5 (Nov. 1979): 38f.

Finding God in All Things

After saying this, what can we add? We still strive to be contemplatives in action. Being leisurely workers does not sound quite the same, but it captures the idea of integrating these two sides of our vocation in a way that refuses to allow the world of total work to dominate our lives. The greatest work we can imagine, even one that would bear tremendous fruit, is still only a means to the end for which we live—the greater glory of God. Continuing to be contemplative in the midst of our action means being receptive to how God’s grace is present, so as to judge by the standard of Christ rather than by the standard of efficiency, productivity, accomplishment. To quote my esteemed tertian director (e. e. cummings in disguise) again, “life (who never grows old) is always beautiful and that nobody beautiful ever hurries.”³⁷ Or, according to one of my mother’s rules: Never do dishes until after visitors leave. Spend time with family and friends while they are present. There will be time enough to clean up later.

When time seems to take control of our lives, it may be helpful to reflect on God’s sense of time when it comes to acting in human history. God waits until Abram and Sarah are old and beyond any expectation of children before calling them from Ur and promising descendants. The people of Israel wander in the desert for forty years before reaching the promised land. Elijah walks forty days and forty nights to the cave where God will speak, and then must wait through the noisy displays to hear the voice of God in the gentle breeze. For God a thousand years are as a single day, and a day is as a thousand years. When God finally intervenes in history by taking on human flesh, it is nearly two thousand years after the first call of Abram. And even then, Jesus is simply the carpenter’s son for thirty years before his short period of public ministry (during which he proclaims a God who lets the weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest). Our tendency all along is to say, “Let’s get on with it”; but God, with infinite patience, waits until all is ready, and especially until we are ready.

In a sense the sabbath is to the rest of my week as prayer time is to the rest of my day. Even though I may not be overwhelmed by mystic graces in my prayer, I have found by experience that setting aside the time I do each morning makes it much more likely that I will slip into prayer at various in-between moments during the day. Similarly, setting aside leisure time at the start of the week does several things. Setting boundaries around my work helps me avoid being driven by it. Spending quality time with people when I am not working makes it less likely that I will ignore the people around me when I am working. And setting aside time to enjoy the beauty of creation on Sunday makes it more likely that I will find myself captured by the bits of beauty which are present in

³⁷ e. e. cummings, “why,” in *95 Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958), #52.

the plants in my room and office or the trees I walk past every day. I keep work in its place by keeping a place for leisure even if I do not always use it.

We have a founder who was moved to tears by looking at the stars and who had a mystical experience of the Trinity as three musical notes. We have a tradition of a course of studies which includes immersion in aesthetics and the arts. And at the center of our spirituality is finding God in all things. It certainly seems appropriate to set aside time to celebrate that presence and the love which impels it.

"Have leisure and know that I am God."³⁸



³⁸ Psalm 55:11, as quoted in Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 19.

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Ignatius Writes to Jaime Cassador

Jaime Cassador, archdeacon (and later archbishop) of Barcelona, was a generous benefactor of Ignatius during his time of studies in Paris. Replying to a letter from him, Ignatius treats six points: (1) the procedure for handling contributions for him in Paris, (2) three of Cassador's nephews in Paris, (3) giving advice to a friend, gravely ill, (4) Ignatius's desire to perform apostolic work in Barcelona, (5) the benefit of frequenting spiritual persons, and (6) why God allows his servants to suffer trials and tribulations. (This translation is the work of Martin E. Palmer, S.J., of the Institute of Jesuit Sources.)

Thus

May the grace and love of Christ our Lord be always for our favor and our help.

Reading a letter from you dated January 5, I not only rejoiced over it but grieved deeply because of it, perceiving in it such contrary and conflicting things. Thus, it had different and opposed effects on me: joy at seeing the excellent zeal which God our Lord gives you for grieving with those who grieve, not only in their corporal but even more abundantly in their spiritual infirmities; great pain at the thought of the disastrous matters that you write to me about. Regarding this, five or six matters occurred to me that I ought to respond to. And so I will begin with the lower ones, those which do less to quench the thirst of our souls, so that we will not end with the savor and taste of things that are less for our eternal salvation.

First: You say that you will not fail to make the usual contribution—I should just let you know when. Isabel Roser wrote me that by April she will supply me with enough to finish my studies. I think this is best, so that she can provide me for the entire year, both for some books and other needs as well. In the meantime, even though the country is

expensive and my health at present is no help for enduring any want or physical hardship beyond those entailed in study itself, I am provided for well enough, since Isabel Roser has had twelve escudos given to me on her account in addition to the other help and alms which you yourself sent me from there for the love and service of God our Lord, who I trust will fully repay you in sound coin not only for what you do for me but also for the great concern you show for my want—I do not think parents could show any greater for their own children. Two weeks before Christmas I was laid up in bed for seven days in Bologna with stomach pains, chills, and fevers, and so I decided to come to Venice. I have been staying here for about a month and a half, very much improved in health, in the house and company of a very good and learned man. For my purposes I do not think I could be better situated anywhere in this whole country.

Second: I was not upset at learning that the three nephews are absent from Marable, though I wish I had some idea why. I expect to find out soon, since I have written to one of my Paris friends asking him to look them up and call on them for me. I say I was not upset,

because unless I am mistaken they are honorable fellows who are careful about their reputation, so that I am confident that, one way or another, they will give a good account of themselves. During my stay there I noticed that Losada had quieted down, and with the example of the other two older ones, especially Jacobo, I trust in God our Lord that they will behave as they ought. May it please him in his complete and sovereign goodness to guide them always with his hand.

Third: As you requested and commanded in our true Lord with regard to Mosén Claret's¹ illness, I have written to him. Since you will see everything in the letter, I need add no more here. I would only ask that you help him provide for his interior health and whatever else God our Lord has given him in this life, since I doubt he would take it from anyone better than from you. For unless he has children or similarly close relatives whom he is legally bound to make his heirs, I think beyond any doubt that it would be better and sounder for him to give what he has to the one from whom he received everything, our universal giver, ruler, and Lord, in pious, just, and holy causes—and as much of it as he can while still living rather than after death. That a man should leave his property to somebody else for the upkeep of horses and dogs, for hunting, honors, dignities, and worldly display is something I cannot approve. St. Gregory lists two degrees of perfection among others: one when a man abandons all he owns to his relatives and kin and follows Christ our Lord, the other (which he rates higher) when in abandoning everything he distributes it to the poor according to the text "If you would be perfect . . ." [Matt. 19:21]. My meaning is that it is better to give to the poor when the need of one's

relatives is not equal to that of the poor who are not one's relatives—for, other things being equal, I ought to do more for my relatives than for those who are not.

Fourth: Regarding the wish you express to see me in Barcelona and preaching in public, be assured that I have the same wish dwelling within me—not as though I flattered myself that I could do what others cannot or could achieve as much as others do there, but to preach as a lesser person on simple, easy, and lesser matters, in hopes that God our Lord would second these lesser matters and interpose his grace so that we may be able to do some good for his praise and rightful service. For this reason, once I finish my studies a year from this Lent, I do not expect to delay a further year to preach his word anywhere else in Spain before we see each other there as we both desire. For I have no doubt that I have a greater liability and debt to the people of Barcelona than to any other town in the world. This is to be understood (the key not erring)² unless God our Lord places me outside of Spain amid greater humiliations and hardships. I am not sure which it will be; but certainly my state will be that of preaching in poverty, with none of the abundance or encumbrances I now have during my studies. At any rate, as a token of what I say, when my studies are over I will send to Barcelona the few books I have or will have, since I promised Isabel Roser I would send them to her.

Fifth: You tell how you wrote to the religious woman³ and would like to see the two of us meet there, in the belief that we would find joy in telling each other about ourselves. I certainly do find, and it is a general rule with me, that when I join

¹ Juan Claret was a man of means whom Ignatius had known in Barcelona.

² "Clave non errante"—a reference to the papal "key"?

³ Identity unknown.

with anyone, even though a great sinner, to talk about the things of God our Lord, I am the one who gains and profits thereby; how much more, then, when it is with persons who are servants and chosen ones of God our Lord, must I not be wholly the gainer in every way? Indeed, ever since Dr. Castro⁴ told me at length about this woman, and learning that she was under your direction, I have felt very much attached to her, glorifying God for what he has thus been working in her. In him I trust that, if it is for his praise and service and our greater advantage, he will bring us together soon.

Sixth: As for what you say about the Monastery of Santa Clara,⁵ I certainly would consider no one a Christian whose soul was not pierced through and through at the thought of so much harm done to the service of God our Lord; and I am less concerned over a single person's failure in judgment than over the consequent harm to many other persons, and to others who might devote themselves to God's service. Indeed, through our misery, just as we find it so hard to overcome ourselves where the spiritual profit is greatest, so a slight occasion is all that is needed for our complete undoing. Indeed, I earnestly wish I could visit these religious to see if I could somehow lay a foundation for their

exercises and way of proceeding, particularly for the woman who is in such anxiety and danger.⁶ For I cannot readily believe that a person who had been living amid worldly pleasures, or with less devotion to God our Lord, and who was of sound judgment, could through serving our Lord better and drawing closer to him be allowed to reach such a state of desperation. Weak human being that I am, if a person came to serve me out of greater love for me, I would never—if it were in my power to prevent it—let him come to such a calamity as this; how much more God our Lord, who, being divine, chose to become human and die solely for the salvation of us all! So I find it hard to believe that for having given herself to divine things, apart from any other interior or future reason, she should have fallen into such torment and misfortune. For it is God's way to bestow understanding, not take it away; to bestow confidence, not hopelessness. I say "apart from any other interior reason" because it is possible that during the time of the exercises her soul was marred by sin; and there are so many kinds of sin that they seem numberless. Or she may have been making the exercises in a marred way: what seems good is not always so, and thus, since good could not abide in the person together with evil, or grace with sin, the enemy could have had considerable power to act. And I said "apart from some other future reason" because, since God our Lord disposes all things with order, weight, and measure, it is possible that the Lord saw that, although in grace at the time, she would fail to take advantage of the graces and gifts she received and, not persevering, fall into greater sins and finally be lost; and that, seeing this, our most kind Lord

⁴ Dr. Juan Castro (1488–1556), a doctor of the Sorbonne, had been given the Exercises by Ignatius in Paris. He later became a Carthusian in Spain.

⁵ A Benedictine (originally Franciscan) monastery of women in Barcelona. Some of the members of the community were women of conspicuous holiness, among them Ignatius's correspondent, Teresa Rejadell, while others did not share this fervor. The more fervent wanted the Society to undertake their direction, but Ignatius never allowed himself to be moved by their entreaties.

⁶ Perhaps Teresa Rejadell, from whom Ignatius was soon to receive a letter.

rewarded her for her slight service by allowing her to fall into these fears and continual temptations, all the while preserving her from perishing. For we must always presume that anything the Lord of the world does in rational souls is either in order to give us greater glory, or else so that we will be less wicked when he finds no better dispositions in us. In short, since we do not know the underlying causes, we can make no judgment about the effects. Accordingly, it is always good for us not only to live in love; it is also very wholesome to live in fear, for his divine judgments are altogether inscrutable, and we may not seek reasons for what he wills. We can only weep, and pray for the greater well-being of her own conscience

and for those of all the other women. May his divine goodness ordain this, and not let the enemy of human nature gain such a victory over these women, whom he has so dearly purchased and entirely redeemed with his most precious blood.

I conclude praying that, by his infinite goodness, he will grant us abundant grace to know his most holy will and entirely to fulfill it.

Venice, February 12, 1536

Poor in goodness,
Inigo

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